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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 000470

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DEPARTMENT FOR INL/HSTC

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [SN](#)
SUBJECT: CHILD SEX TOURISM LAW IMMINENT?

REF: A. SINGAPORE 3614
[B](#). SINGAPORE 3090
[C](#). WILLETT-CLARK EMAILS

Classified By: Economic/Political Counselor Laurent D. Charbonnet
for reasons 1.4 (d)

[1](#). (C) Summary. The GOS is preparing the legislative measures necessary to make child sex tourism extraterritorially illegal, according to a local NGO. The timing of the changes remains uncertain, however, given Parliament's current focus on the budget. Despite Parliament's current heavy workload, the NGO representative expressed hope that the government would enact the measures in the next few months, and noted that in the interim the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports clearly are preparing to implement the law. End summary.

[2](#). (C) Saleemah Ismail, Vice President of the National Committee for Unifem, Singapore (strictly protect), told Emboff on February 8 that Members of Parliament and the Ministry of Community Development, Youth, and Sports have confirmed to her that the government will soon make having sex with underage persons abroad an offense under Singapore law. Ismail expected the government would amend the Penal Code to enact the measure, and would do so in conjunction with amendments raising the minimum age of consent for commercial sex to 18 and lifting the ban on oral sex. Ismail said that Indranee Rajah, Member of Parliament for the ruling PAP and chair of the Parliamentary Committee for Law (who spoke at Unifem and Shared Hope International's joint trafficking conference in Singapore last April), told her that she had drafted the amendments and expected to formally propose them in Parliament soon.

[3](#). (C) Ismail noted that the government has been non-committal on when Parliament would entertain the proposed amendments, and speculated that the government's current focus on the budget (due to be completed by early March) and a possible general election in the next few months might prevent Parliament from addressing these matters until summer. Ismail was hopeful, however, that the government would want to address these issues before an election, as the child sex tourism measure appears to have significant public support, and the lifting of the ban on oral sex would lend support to the government's assertion that Singapore is "loosening up." The government had previously indicated it would announce the changes at the end of 2005, but the January 2006 sitting of Parliament was completely consumed by investigations into a corruption scandal in a local charity and the resulting fallout.

[4](#). (C) For its part, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) is preparing its public education campaign to spread the message that persons engaging in sex with children abroad will be prosecuted at home, according to

Ismail, who said that the posters and other materials were already printed and ready for distribution. (The campaign is also intended to fulfill the commitment made by all ASEAN leaders at their summit in 2004, to do more to raise awareness of child sex tourism.) Ismail said that MCYS had contacted Unifem for advice on placement of the advertisements, and she noted that Unifem has prepared its own campaign to complement the government's and has offered to coordinate with MCYS to ensure that Unifem puts its ads in channels in which the government cannot pay for advertising services, such as online sex forums.

15. (C) Ismail added that the Ministry of Home Affairs is also gearing up for the enforcement of the new law. According to her, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) already has several undercover police officers working in Batam (the primary destination for Singaporean sex tourists and a location where around one-third of prostitutes are estimated to be underage) to gain an understanding of the environment. Although they do not yet have the legal authority to act, Ismail said that the SPF has worked closely with the Batam police and has passed on to them any leads it discovers. She said that the recent creation of Riau Islands province has given the Batam Police more autonomy to cooperate closely with the SPF without Jakarta's knowledge, and pointed to the recent bust of a baby-selling ring in Batam (the clients were Singaporean couples) as a case that the SPF actually investigated, but let the Batam police take full credit.

16. (C) Comment: Adoption of an extraterritorial child sex tourism law has been a key USG recommendation for Singapore. If enacted, the law will mark a major success in our efforts to encourage the Singapore public and government to recognize that child prostitution and sex-trafficking are a serious

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problem in the region, and that Singapore has an important role to play in combating such crimes. The education campaign that will follow the law's passage and resulting increase in awareness of significant legal penalties for such behavior likely will help deter Singaporeans engaging in the underage sex trade abroad.

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